

# Executive Summary

## Vegetation Management Plan



Prepared by the Vegetation Advisory Board  
of the  
Town of Southern Shores  
March 2006

# Executive Summary

**"Any significant and sustained losses of vegetation in the five zones have serious and negative effects."**

*1<sup>st</sup> report to council, April 2002*

**"The burden of vegetation preservation rests on the town."**

*2<sup>nd</sup> report to council, April 2004*

**"These numbers are truly amazing! If not reversed, the result will be a grossly degraded natural environment."**

*3<sup>rd</sup> report to council November 2004*

# Executive Summary

## Background

- Citizens' petition against loss of vegetation
- Creation of Vegetation Advisory Committee
- Analysis of situation and trends
- Production of information brochures
- VAC recommendations to Council
- Council elevates VAC to Board status

# Vegetation Management Plan



## Our Natural Resource: A Barrier Island

- Five Vegetation Zones
- Accelerating Trend in Vegetation Loss

# Barrier Islands



- Fragile areas in dynamic balance
- Subject to constant change



- Subject to sudden change
- Vulnerable to man-made change

# Five Vegetation Zones

- Ocean Beach and Foredune
- Flats and Thickets
- High Dunes
- Maritime Forest
- Ginguite Marsh and Sound Shore



# Vegetation Zones

## Ocean Beach and Foredune



# Ocean Beach and Foredune



- First line of defense.
- Beach grass builds and holds sand.
- Requires protection and management.



# Vegetation Zones

## Flats and Thickets



# Flats and Thickets



- When native grasses thrive, they stabilize sand and impede erosion.
- Thickets provide animal habitat and privacy.
- Shrubs and trees provide shelter and are precursors to Maritime Forest.
- Shrubs and trees are naturally sculpted by wind-borne salt.



# Vegetation Zones

## High Dunes



# High Dunes



- Typically sparser vegetation on higher elevations.
- Especially vulnerable to high winds, erosion, and disturbance.
- Drought, salt, and wind-resistant native plants provide ground cover.



# Vegetation Zones

## Maritime Forest



# Maritime Forest



- Mature diverse plant community.
- Increased clear-cutting has caused citizen concerns.
- Openings in forest canopy increase potential wind damage.
- One of few Atlantic Coast Maritime Forests in private ownership.



# Vegetation Zones

## Ginguite Marsh and Sound Shore



# Ginguite Marsh and Sound Shore



- Brackish wetland.
- Provides filter and nursery for various flora and fauna.
- Provides habitat for aquatic species.

# Summary of Issues

**Increasing and accelerating loss of native vegetation is altering the character and environmental quality of our Town.**

# Summary of Issues

## Increased

- ↑ clear-cutting and land-scraping
- ↑ storm water runoff
- ↑ non-native planting
- ↑ maintenance costs
- ↑ water pollution from chemicals
- ↑ wind/water erosion

## Decreased

- ↓ protection from weather events
- ↓ natural wind breaks
- ↓ privacy
- ↓ property values
- ↓ animal habitat
- ↓ water quality
- ↓ native plant diversity

*Disappearance of our Town's unique character.*

# **Vegetation Management Objectives**

**Eliminate the indiscriminate and accelerating loss of native plant species.**

**Promote the restoration of native plant diversity.**

**Maintain the unique vegetative appearance, quality, and character of our Town.**

# Vegetation Management Objectives

- Integrate vegetation and storm water management
- Increase the use of native plants for landscaping
- Provide information and incentives for native plant conservation
- Resolve safety issues
- Reduce hazards
- Reduce the loss of native vegetation
- Reduce the use of chemicals
- Manage noxious plants
- Meet criteria for Tree City USA
- Develop controls for effective vegetation management



# Policy Considerations

- Implement total ban of clear-cutting and land-scraping.
- Restrict and monitor vegetation destruction during construction/reconstruction.
- Reduce the use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers.
- Conserve beach grasses and thickets.

# Policy Considerations cont'd

- Reduce non-native plants in landscaping.
  - exotic and alien species
  - lawn turf grasses
- Re-vegetate Town properties with native plants.
- Implement community demonstration projects on Town properties:
  - native plant plots
  - interpretive signs
- Apply for Tree City USA certification.

# Short Term Actions

“The Committee strongly recommends that the Council re-examine the issue of ordinances - *enforceable and with appropriate effective penalties for noncompliance* - as the only truly effective and lasting means of controlling the accelerating loss of native vegetation.”

*3<sup>rd</sup> report to council, November 2004*

# Short Term Actions

- Develop policies to conserve native vegetation
- Develop guidelines for vegetation disturbance
- Conduct more effective site reviews
- Require the use of a vegetation map
- Encourage the use of native landscaping
- Review other coastal community controls
- Implement an aggressive communication program
- Conduct seminars on the benefits of native vegetation
- Implement demonstration projects

**Native Vegetation**

**Conserve**

**Re-vegetate**